

National Elk Refuge News – June 16, 2011

Refuge Programs Receive National Award



Two National Elk Refuge programs received national recognition this week by being selected for the 2011 Beacon Award from the American Recreation Coalition. The award recognizes outstanding efforts by federal agencies and partners in using technology to improve public recreation experiences and federal recreation program management.

Nominations and selections were judged against the following award criteria:

- Innovative use of technology for visitor services or recreation management;
- Use of partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations;
- Efforts to share news of creative solutions within the agency; and
- Community support for the work of this initiative.

Recipients were given the award during Great Outdoors Week on Monday, June 13, at a ceremony on the patio of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Whitten Building in Washington, DC. They included:

- Lake Okeechobee Visitor Center Rehabilitation Project, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Cleveland and Angeles National Forests Apply Robert Bateman's Get to Know Your Wild Neighbors Program, U.S. Forest Service
- Web Enhancements of Delivery USFS Recreation, U.S. Forest Service
- "Journals & JPGs: Seasons on the (National Elk) Refuge" and "Refuge Connections," U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Visitor Enjoyment Initiative, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Youth Ambassador Program at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, National Park Service

The National Elk Refuge "Journals and JPGs" program utilizes technology to unleash student creativity and understanding of the Refuge. Art, science, writing, and digital photography are used to stimulate the interest of Teton County School District second-grade students. The concept of an ecosystem comes alive through seasonal visits and observations.



Lori Iverson, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner for the National Elk Refuge, is flanked by Mike Molino, Board Member for the American Recreation Coalition (left), and Jim Kurth, Acting Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System (right).

The result is a lasting connection with local natural resources. A second program, "Refuge Connections," specifically targets first-generation Latinos, a rapidly growing segment of the community. Employing field guides, digital cameras, naturalist and computers, Teton County School District English Language Learner (ELL) students convert time in the field observing the National Elk Refuge into presentations utilizing photos and recorded sounds. Information on the programs, which involve multiple community partners, has been featured in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's national *Refuge Update* publication.

A news release about the 2011 Beacon Award can be found at <http://www.funoutdoors.com/>